



Five Key Components of a Farm-to-School Program

Farm-to-School programs and activities can be an extremely effective means of implementing a school wellness policy. Montana Team Nutrition has identified five key components of Farm-to-School programming that can be considered when developing a school wellness policy implementation plan. The five components are listed below along with examples of activities that fit within each component (of course, these are just a few of many possible activities). Feel free to contact Montana Team Nutrition program for additional clarification on these components. Check out our Farm to School Web site for more ideas located at:

<http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/FTS.html>.

1. Student Gardening: Connecting to the Source of Your Food

- Start a school/classroom garden: Specify a gardening activity and use funds to purchase supplies (e.g., seeds, potting soil, and starter pots) for the classroom projects or a few shovels and hoes for a school garden.
- Use a school garden to teach food safety through proper harvesting, processing, and storage.
- Begin a compost project or a school orchard/edible school yard.
- Tie school garden activities with nutrition education in order to help students learn where food really comes from and gain an appreciation for nutrition and healthy foods.
- Provide children with hands-on experiences that support the message of eating more fruits, vegetables, and other fresh products.
- Contact your local MSU Extension office to see if there is a Master Gardener's program that can assist with your project.
- Partner with local gardening supply sources to ensure long-term sustainability of the gardening project.

2. Curriculum Related Projects

- Purchase a curriculum for the classroom that makes a connection between good health and nutritious foods such as those grown in their school/classroom garden, the local community, or throughout the state of Montana.
- Integrate food and agriculture knowledge with standard science, math, and social studies curricula.
- Invite students to "map" foods produced throughout the state of Montana or within their local community.

3. Connecting to Local Food Producers: Field Trips

- Take a field trip to a local farm, dairy, ranch, orchard, farmer's market, greenhouse, food co-op, or processing plant. Arrange for the students to take part in planting, harvesting, milking, digging, weeding, packaging, or sampling (taste testing).
- Invite a guest speaker to talk to your class about farming, ranching, gardening, agriculture, sustainability or nutrition.
- Visit a local grocery store and look for Montana grown items that are available to the students and their families.

4. Promotion and Marketing: Connecting School, Families and the Community to the Farm-to-Fork Initiative

- Plan local foods into the school meals and snack menus.
- Host a “Local Foods Festival” in your cafeteria. Promote the school meal program while emphasizing “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food.”
- Plan a taste testing session highlighting local foods to interest students in new locally sourced food items for the school breakfast or lunch menus.
- Arrange a student “brainstorm” session, inviting their ideas on how to incorporate local foods into the school meal menu or after-school snack program.
- Highlight a different local food product each month, promoting its culinary uses, nutritional value and information about where and how it is grown in Montana.
- Partner with others in the community to educate the general public about the three key elements of sustainable food systems: providing good nutrition for human health, ensuring the economic well-being of the community, and utilizing agricultural practices that allow for long-term conservation of our natural resources.
- Initiate a campaign among students, parents, administrators and community members to advocate for more Montana produced foods on school meal menus and at home.
- Implement a Montana Farm-to-School Fundraising Project – Contact Mary Stein for more information on this activity or go to www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/FTS.htm.
- Initiate a “Local Foods” party as a basis for a school celebration or classroom party.
- Organize students to create a “Food/Gift Buyer’s Guide,” highlighting local establishments that sell foods/gifts made in the state of Montana.
- Develop or enhance the school food service recycling program.

5. Professional Development

- Provide training for school food service professionals, teachers, administrators, and/or community members on the value of Farm-to-School programs, and ways to initiate and sustain a program in your school/district.
- Train educators on the use of a Farm-to-School curriculum for use within their science, math, language arts, health enhancement or other related curriculum.
- Train school food service professionals in working with local, seasonal foods and recipe adaptations to include more local ingredients. Explore ways for menu and recipe development or modification in combining local foods with the *USDA Commodity Foods* to serve affordable Montana menus.

Montana Office of Public Instruction's Farm-to-School Web site <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/FTS.html>

Related Web Sites

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/>; or <http://www.farmtoschool.org/MT/programs.htm>
<http://www.missoulacfac.org/content/index/19>
<http://www.growmontana.ncat.org/>
<http://www.aeromt.org/>
<http://www.vtfeed.org/>
http://www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html

